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THE ERADICATION OF THE CANADIAN THISTLE
THROUGH THE ACTION OF CONCENTRATED
SULFURIC ACID

HARRY F. LEWIS

(*ABSTRACT*)

Mt. Vernon, Iowa, June 15, 1926 — Dr. H. F. Lewis of the Chemistry Department of Cornell College, Mount Vernon, Iowa who has developed a method for the eradication of the Canada Thistle in conjunction with J. D. Peet, a farmer of Mt. Vernon, Iowa, makes public the result of the first year's work on the farms of Mr. Peet.

Three patches of the thistle were treated last summer. The first had about 500 plants, the second 2000-3000, while the third had better than 10,000. The method of treatment is simple and is based upon the work which has been done in the east on the removal of weeds from lawns. The plant is cut to the ground, preferably before the flowering stage, and a few drops of concentrated sulfuric acid is dropped on the top of the stalk where it emerges from the ground. If this is done early in the summer, the acid will get practically all the plants.

Mr. Peet went over the patches every two weeks in the same manner. This is necessary for there are a very few plants on the outer edge of the patch that may come up after the first treatment. Of all the plants treated in this way last year, but few appeared again this spring. The first patch of five hundred showed two, the second, none, while the third and largest patch had ten plants this spring. To the farmer who has treated the thistle by the usual methods of the past, such a result will indicate that this method is worth a trial. The only expense is that of the acid and if the commercial grade of concentrated acid is bought, this will not exceed ten cents a pound. This may be applied by means of a large medicine dropper. It is a good idea to have washing soda in powdered form handy to apply to either the skin or clothing where the acid may fall accidentally. By applying at once the acid will be neutralized. Acid getting on the skin should be washed off immediately with water. Experience has shown that after the acid has been applied to the plants, the field should not be plowed under. It is better to let the plants die out first for plowing under results in more plants coming up to be removed by the second treatment.

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